

Remarks

In response to the office action dated September 2, 2003, the applicant is making amendments to the specification, claims and drawings. Dealing with the matters raised in turn by the Examiner, the applicant comments as follows.

Drawings

A replacement set of drawings is attached in which Figs. 1, 4 and 5a have been amended as required by the Examiner and simultaneously, all of the remaining Figures have been drawn more formally.

Specification

In the enclosed amendments dealing with the specification, each of the matters requiring correction has been attended to.

Claims

Claim 1 has been amended to include the features that each of the main conference and sub-conference utilize at least one of a plurality of media types select from the group consisting of video, audio and data signals, and including the further step that users in the sub-conference can select one or more of said media types for use in the sub-conference.

Beyda (US 6,404,873) discloses that a sub-conference can be set up for a limited number of the main conference participants. Participants in the sub-conference are provided with the voice data from the main conference, but voice data from the sub-conference participants is limited to other sub-conference participants.

In other words, the participant who are in the main conference will contribute to a first voice data stream. Participants in a sub-conference will contribute to a second voice data stream. Only the

sub-conference participants are provided with a mix of the first and second voice data streams. The remaining main conference participants are provided with the first voice data stream.

Beyda further discloses, in column 5, that the data mixer can also be configured to mix whiteboard data and video data from the main conference call with whiteboard data and video data from the sub-conference call. In other words, if there is a multimedia main conference, then the users will also be provided with a multimedia sub-conference using the same media.

Claim 1 now provides that the sub-conference participants can select which of the media types is to be used in the sub-conference. The primary purpose of a sub-conference is to provide discreet communication between users who may remain in the main conference. The further step of claim 1 allows the sub-conference participants to choose how they wish to communicate. For example, if all three media types are used in the main conference, minor matters could be dealt with by arranging a data (whiteboard) only sub-conference, similar to passing notes in conventional meetings. At the same time, all users would remain fully in the video and audio streams of the conference. Alternatively, the sub-conference could use video, audio, or all three media types if this was deemed necessary. Nothing in Beyda recognises that selective media utilisation is desirable or possible and therefore it could not be obvious to arrive at the claimed invention. The claimed invention provides greater flexibility in the context of multimedia sub-conferences.

It is submitted that in the absence of any teaching towards these features, non-obviousness over Beyda et al should be recognized. The claimed invention provides a far greater degree of flexibility and user control when setting up a sub-conference. This enables the sub-conference to be less obtrusive or obvious to other main conference participants, which can be extremely important in ensuring that there are discrete communication or "asides" between parties.

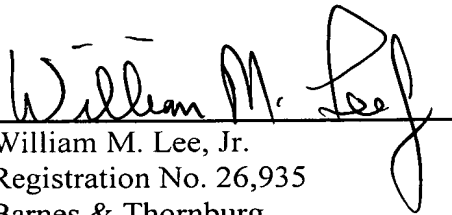
Each of the other independent claims has been amended in similar fashion to reflect the inventive feature that the media types for use during the sub-conference are user selectable rather than being a fixed feature of the system outside the control of the user. Those claims are thus submitted to be allowable.

In view of the above, further and favorable reconsideration of the application is requested.

An appropriate petition for extension of time is also submitted herewith.

January 2, 2004

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William M. Lee, Jr.", written over a horizontal line.

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